

L. VORONKOVA

HAPPY



DAYS

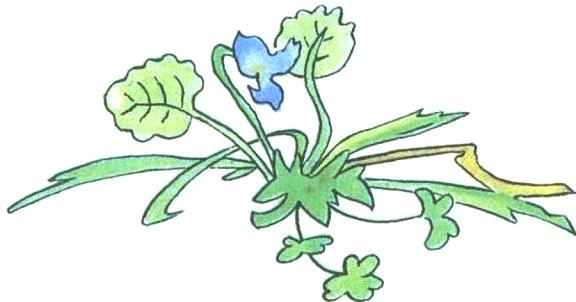
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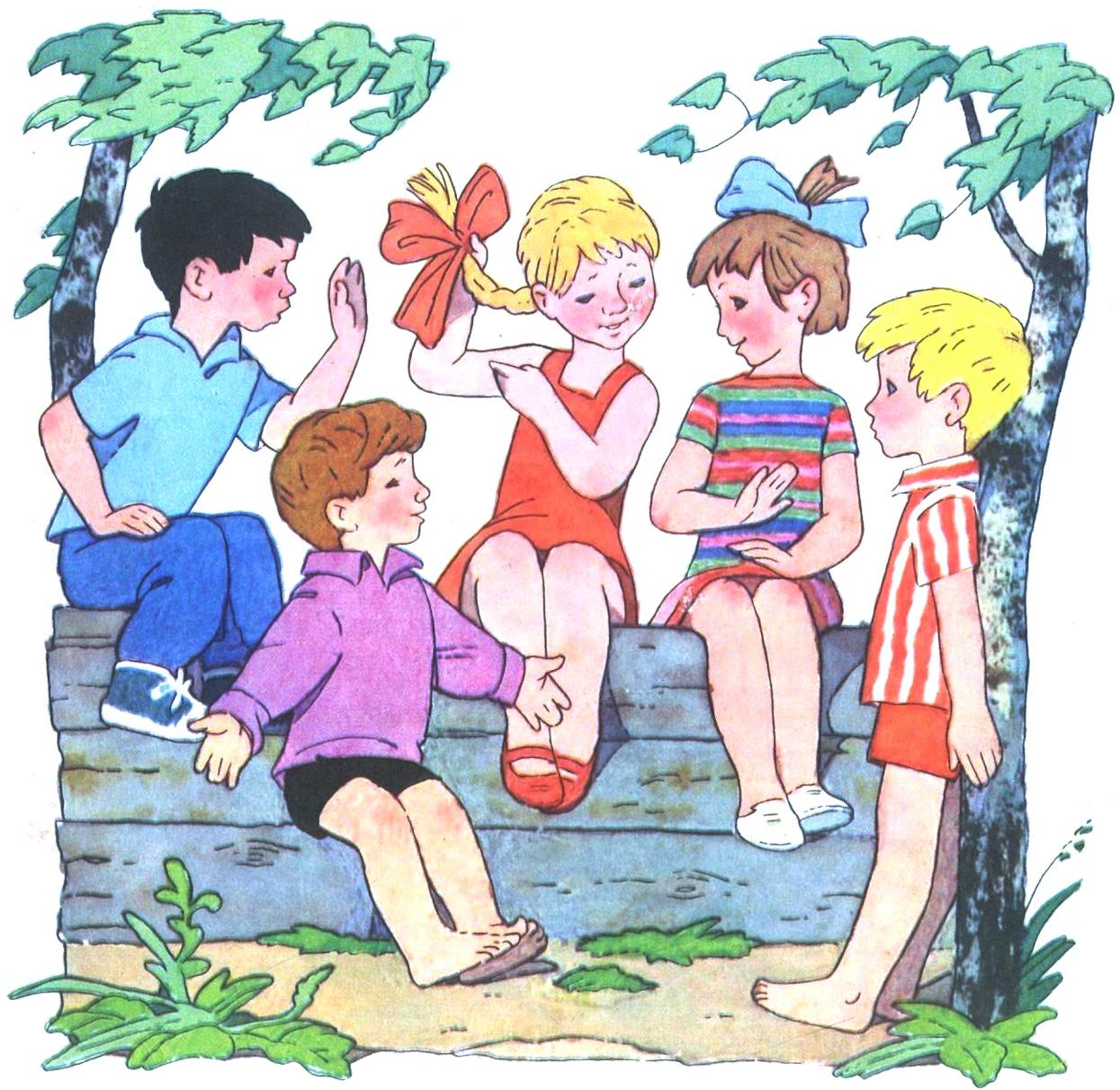
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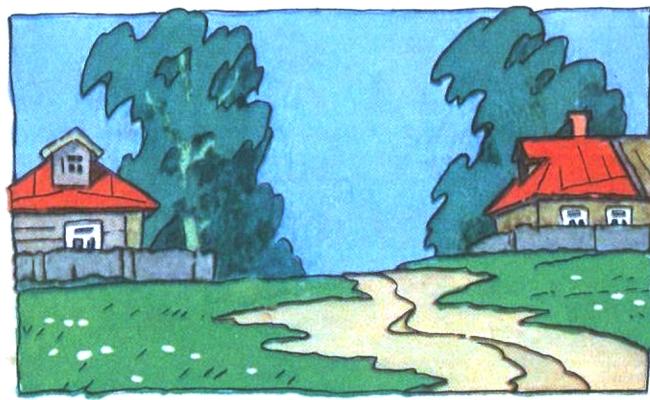
HAPPY DAYS



Translated from the Russian by
Fainna GLAGOLEVA

MALYSH PUBLISHERS MOSCOW





HAPPY DAYS

The children were sitting on the logs by the birch trees and talking.

“This is my happy day,” Lena said. “See my new bow? See how pretty it is?” She held up her braid and showed them her new bow.

“This is my happy day, too,” said Tanya. “I have a new box of crayons. A whole big box.”

“What’s so good about that?” said Petya. “I have a fishing rod. I can catch as many fish as I want to.



What's so good about your crayons? You'll use them up, and then you won't have any left."

Dima wanted to have something to boast about, too.

"I have a shirt with long sleeves! See?" he said and spread his arms wide so they could see what a nice shirt he had on.

Vanya listened, but said nothing.

"Vanya doesn't have anything to be happy about. Not even a teeny-weeny something," Lena said.

"Yes, I do. I saw some flowers," Vanya said.

The other children all started speaking at once.

"What kind of flowers?"

"Where did you see them?"

"In the woods. In a clearing. When I got lost. It was late and started getting dark. But the flowers were full of light."

His friends laughed. They all thought he was silly.





“The woods are full of flowers. That’s nothing special to be happy about.”

“In the winter I saw the roofs,” Vanya said. This made them laugh still harder.

“Don’t you see the roofs in the summer?”

“Sure, I do. But there was snow on them in the winter. And the sun was shining. The roofs were blue on one side and pink on the other. And they sparkled.”

“Humph! We’ve all seen snow on the roofs. But you made up the part about them being pink and blue,” Lena said.

“Sure, he did. He’s just teasing us!” said Petya.

“Maybe there’s some other happy thing you can tell us about,” Tanya said.

“All right. I saw some silver fishes.”

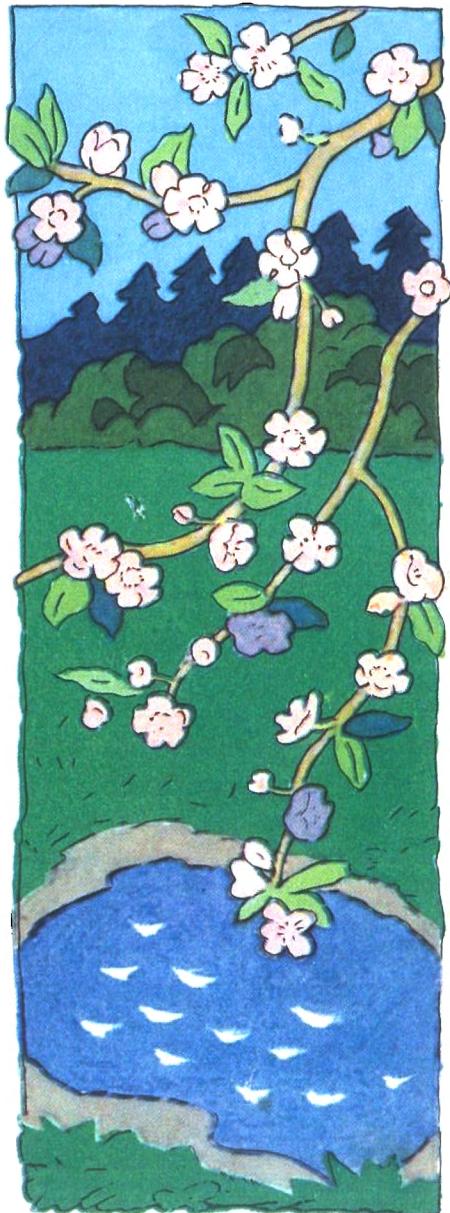
Dima jumped up.
“Where?”

“Real ones? Real silver fishes?” Now Petya also jumped up. “In the pond or in the river?”

“In a puddle.”

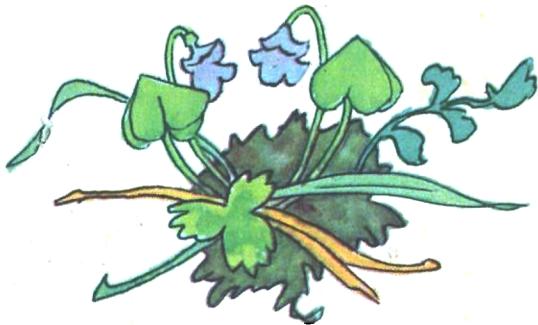
They all shrieked with laughter, but Petya grumbled, “I said he was just teasing!”

“No, I’m not. There was a puddle under the apple tree after the rain. It was as blue as the sky. And the sun was shining in it. And the wind was blowing. The water kept shivering. That’s when I saw the silver fishes in it.”



“He’s just making things up,” Lena said and laughed. “He really doesn’t have any happy days.”

Tanya seemed to be thinking about something. Then she said, “Maybe he’s had more happy days than us. Because he finds them everyplace.”





A WHOLE WEEK

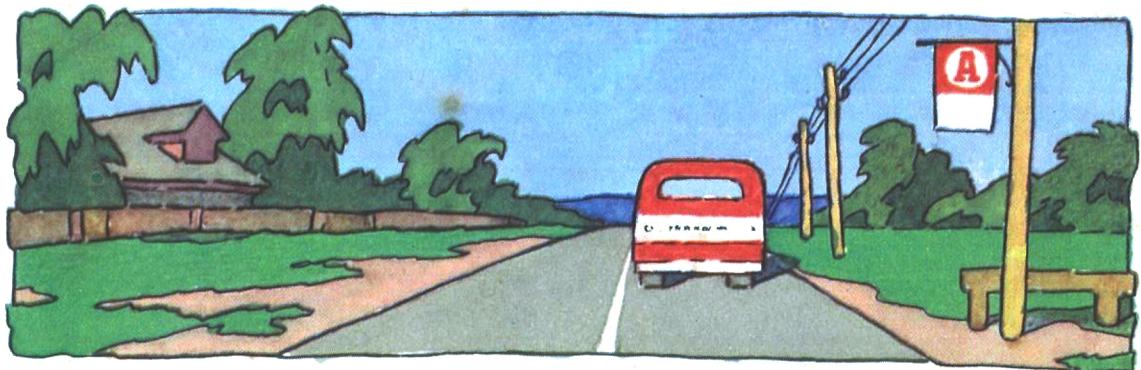
Mommy left for Moscow, but before she left she said, "I don't want you to miss me, Vanya. I'll be back in a week. As soon as you see a red letter day on the calendar you'll know I'm coming home."

"When'll that be?"

"Sunday is a red letter day. That's in seven days from now."

"Seven days! But you said you're only going for a week."





Mommy laughed. “Seven days make a week. It’ll be over before you know it.”

She said goodbye to Daddy, Grandma and Vanya and was gone.

Monday

On Monday Grandma said, “I can’t run around after you, Vanya, so try not to get into mischief.”

“All right.”

Vanya went outside and saw his friends Grinya and Fedyo.

“There’s a moose in the woods,” Grinya said. “The shepherd saw it. He saw it when he was out in the meadow with the horses at night. The moose



came out of the woods and went to the lake to drink. Boy, I wish I could see it!"

"Let's go then," Vanya said.

Fedya stared at him.

"Where'll we find it?"

"We'll look for it."

Vanya was all set to go, but Grandma had heard them talking and called to them from the window.

"Don't go to the woods, boys. You're not old enough to go there by yourselves. You'll get lost. Play in the yard." The lawn in the yard was grassy and green. There were young birch trees near the fence. A birdhouse had been nailed to one of them.

"Let's watch the starlings feed their babies," Vanya said.

The boys sat down on the bench and watched the birds. First, the mother bird

flew up carrying a big bug in her beak.

A moment later the bird-house was filled with loud cheeping. The baby starlings were all shouting at once: "It's mine! It's mine!"

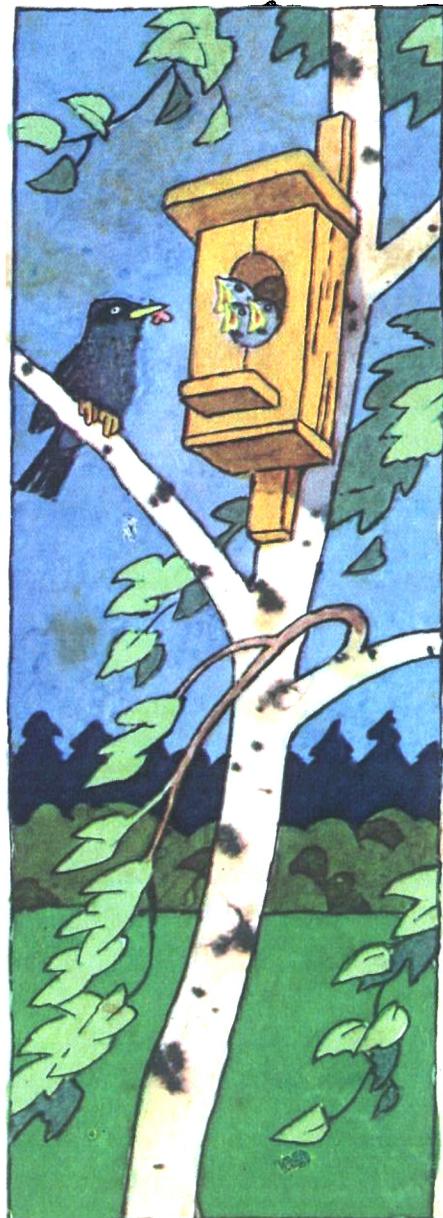
"Watch me climb the tree," Grinya said.

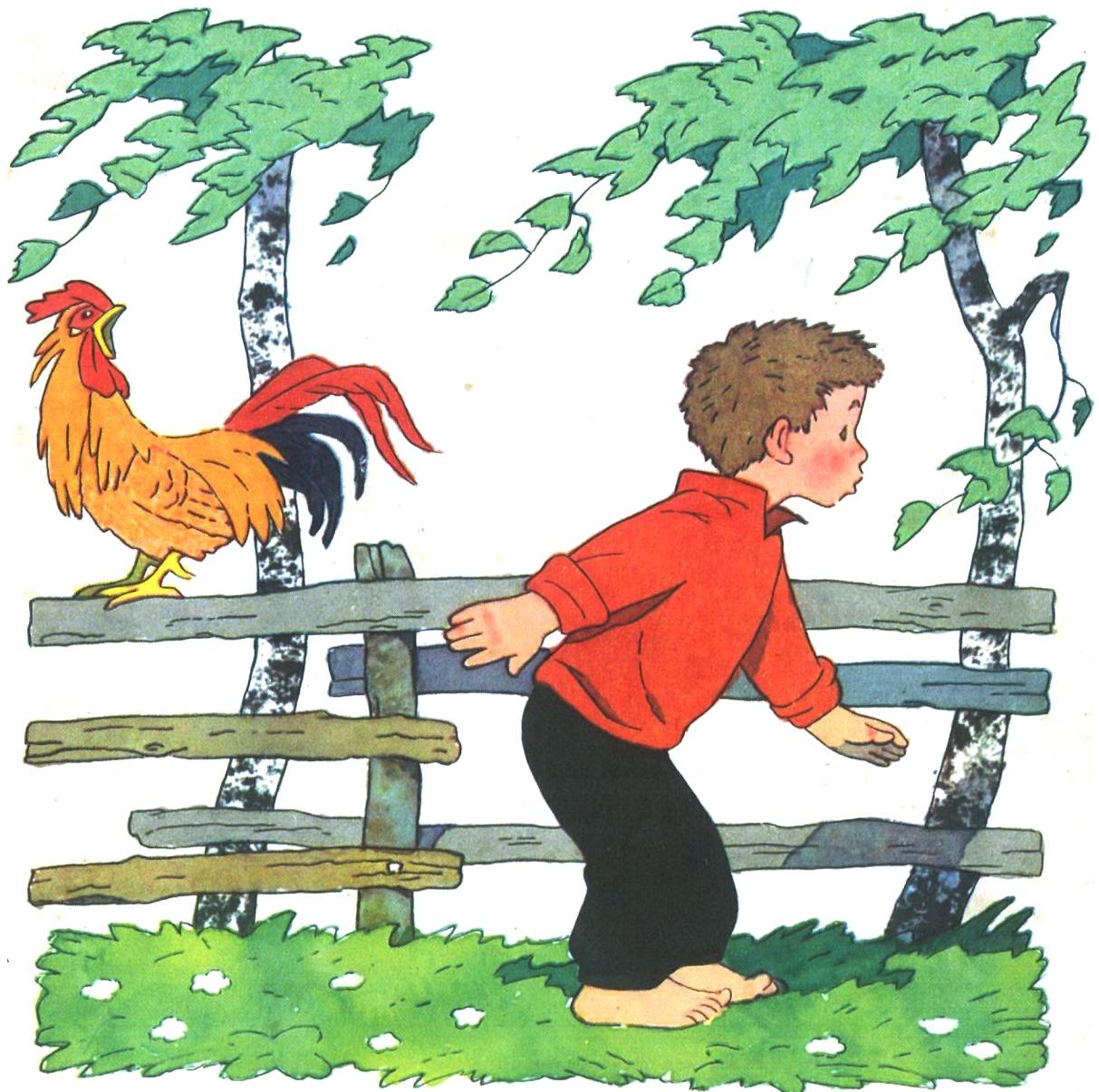
"What for?" Vanya asked.

"To get a baby bird." Grinya climbed the fence and grabbed hold of a branch.

"Get down!" Vanya shouted. "Don't you touch them!"

Grinya was stronger than Vanya, but Vanya was not afraid of him. He climbed onto the fence and grabbed hold of Grinya's leg, pulling both of them down. Grinya scratched his cheek, and Vanya tore his shirt. They both toppled over and then







jumped up, red-faced and as angry as two roosters.

"Who says I can't take one?" Grinya shouted.

"I do!" Vanya shouted back.

And he wouldn't let him. Grinya finally went home in a huff.

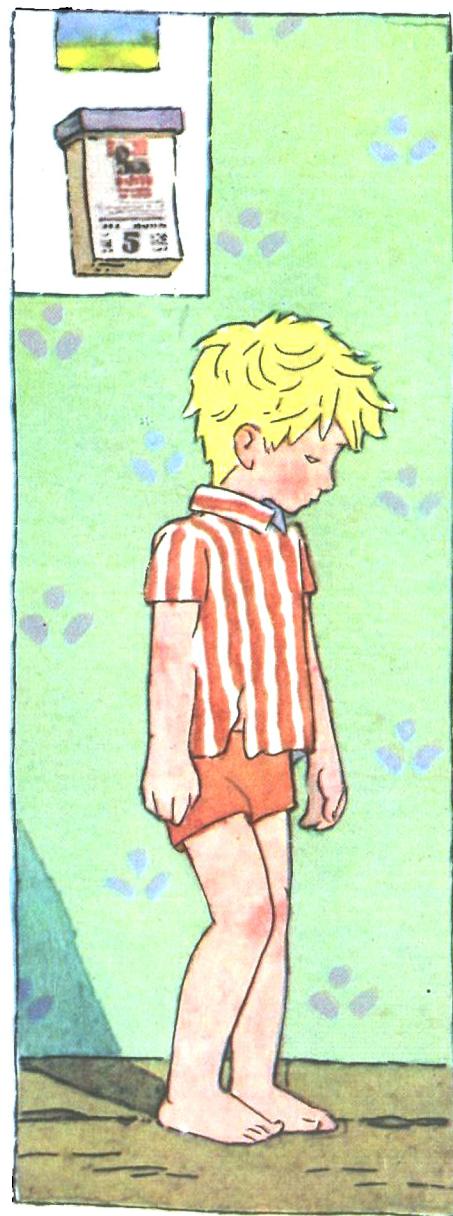
"I'd never fight," Fedya said.

Vanya did not reply. He went back into the house.

When Grandma saw him she shook her head and said, "Didn't you promise you'd be a good boy? You've been fighting, and you tore your shirt."

The way Grandma saw it, this was all true. He had been fighting and he had torn his shirt.

Though Vanya didn't say anything, he was thinking, "But I saved the baby birds!"





Tuesday

Vanya's father was an agronomist.

He would set out for the fields every morning to see how the ploughing was coming along.

He had to see if the seeds that were going to be planted were healthy. Then, after they were planted, he had to see how the green shoots were coming up.

Daddy's work was very interesting.

On Tuesday he said to Vanya, "Come along with me. You've been getting into mischief and fighting here. They've set up a new sprinkler in the field. You'll see how it works."

Vanya was very happy. Daddy lifted him up into the saddle, got on behind, and they trotted off to the fields.

| It was a very hot summer. There had been no rain for a long time. The horse trotted along the dry, white road, raising clouds of dust.) At last they reached a big field. Dry ears of wheat rustled in the field.

“The wheat’s crying for rain,” Daddy said.
“Otherwise the grain won’t ripen.”

| The next field was a potato field. The furrows had become dry and white from the sun. The potato vines were stunted. They couldn’t grow properly. There were buds on some of the vines, but they weren’t strong enough to blossom and drooped in the sun.)





“Are the potatoes crying for rain, too?” Vanya wanted to know.

“Oh, yes! And that’s just what we’ll give them today.”

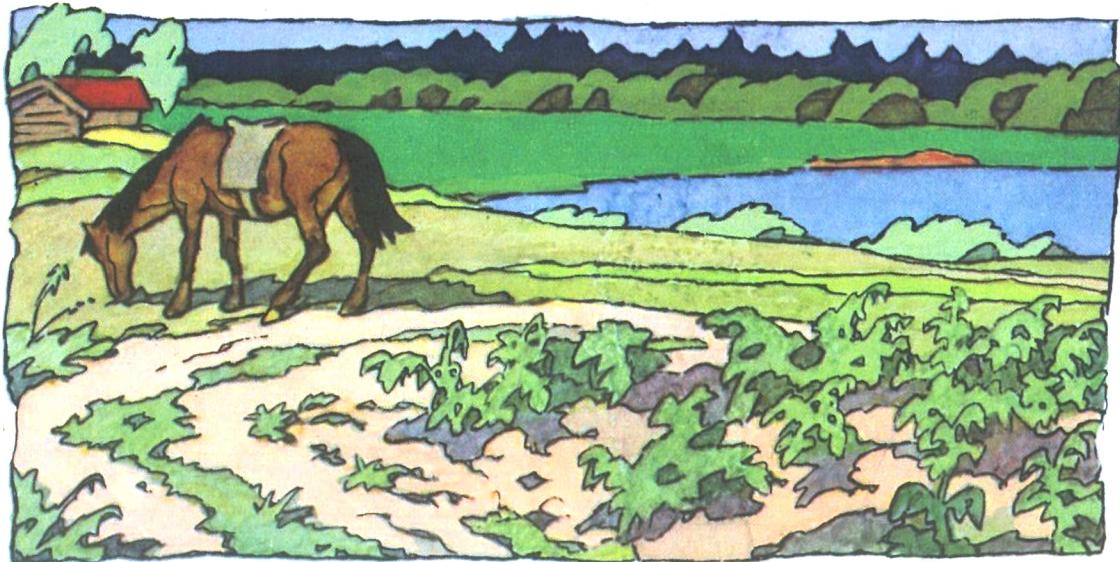
Vanya looked up at the sky. There was not a cloud in sight. Where would the rain come from?

(The collective farm chairman and some other men were walking up and down along the furrows.

Daddy dismounted and set Vanya down.)

“Stay here and watch it rain,” he said.

Vanya was puzzled. Was Daddy fooling him? He



knew that there could never be any rain on such a hot, sunny day.

Had Daddy simply taken him along to keep him out of mischief? Had Grandma told Daddy to take him, because he didn't mind her and was always getting into trouble?

But Daddy never fooled him.

Vanya didn't know what a sprinkler was, but if Daddy said it was going to rain, it meant it was.

Now Daddy went over to the men, and they all walked to the lake at the far edge of the field. It





glittered like a strip of silver.) That was the lake the moose had come to drink from at dawn.

Vanya stood waiting.

Suddenly it began to rain, but the rain was not falling from the sky. It was shooting up from the ground. All along the potato field bright streams of water were gushing up and sparkling in the sun. Vanya shouted excitedly. He ran into the field to see where the rain was coming from. There he saw pipes laid along every furrow. The water was spurting from them.

Vanya didn't want to miss anything. He wanted to see the pipes and the holes the water was shooting from. He touched the pipes and ran farther on, and all the while the rain kept raining down on him.

When Daddy came back he said, "How do you like the sprinkler?"

"It's great!"

Then Daddy looked at Vanya closely and stopped smiling.

"You're drenched. And look at the mud on your feet! Why did you run around in the field?"

"I wanted to see all the pipes."

"Well, I can understand that, but what will Grandma say when she sees you?"

Vanya looked at his soggy canvas shoes and said, "But now I know how a sprinkler makes rain."

Wednesday

On Wednesday Grandma did not let Vanya go outside.

“I’ll be weeding the beets, but you stay here. The hen’s chicks are going to hatch today, and I want you to listen for them. The minute you hear them cheeping call me.”

Grandma went out to the garden. Vanya squatted beside the hen. He was waiting for the chicks to begin cheeping. The hen was in a basket. It was a black speckled hen with a pink comb. Vanya stared at the hen, and the hen stared back at him. Every now and then it would open its beak, because it was hot.

“I wonder how a chick gets into an egg?” Vanya said to himself. “There’s a





white and a yolk, but how does the chick get there? How can it grow inside an egg?"

This was something he could not understand, so he stuck his hand under the hen and pulled out an egg. The hen pecked him, but not very hard.

The egg was warm. Vanya held it up to the light. Still, he couldn't see inside it.

"I'll crack the shell and have a look," he decided. And that's just what he did. Inside was a wet little chick. Its eyes were shut, and it wasn't moving. Vanya breathed on the chick and tried to warm it in his hands, but the chick would not come to life. He burst into tears and ran out to the garden to show the chick to Grandma.



“Grandma! You said the chicks would cheep, but they’re dead!”

Grandma looked at the chick and threw up her hands.

“Look what you’ve done! You’ve killed it! Never crack a shell. When it’s time for the chick to hatch it’ll peck through the shell itself. My goodness, I can’t leave you alone for a minute!”

After lunch both Vanya and Grandma cheered up, because the chicks were beginning to hatch.

Vanya heard the first chick and shouted, “Come here, Grandma! It’s hatching!”

Grandma raised one of the hen’s wings. There was a fluffy yellow chick with shiny black eyes under it. Grandma threw the empty shell out of the basket.

“Did the chick break the shell all by himself?” Vanya asked. He was really surprised.

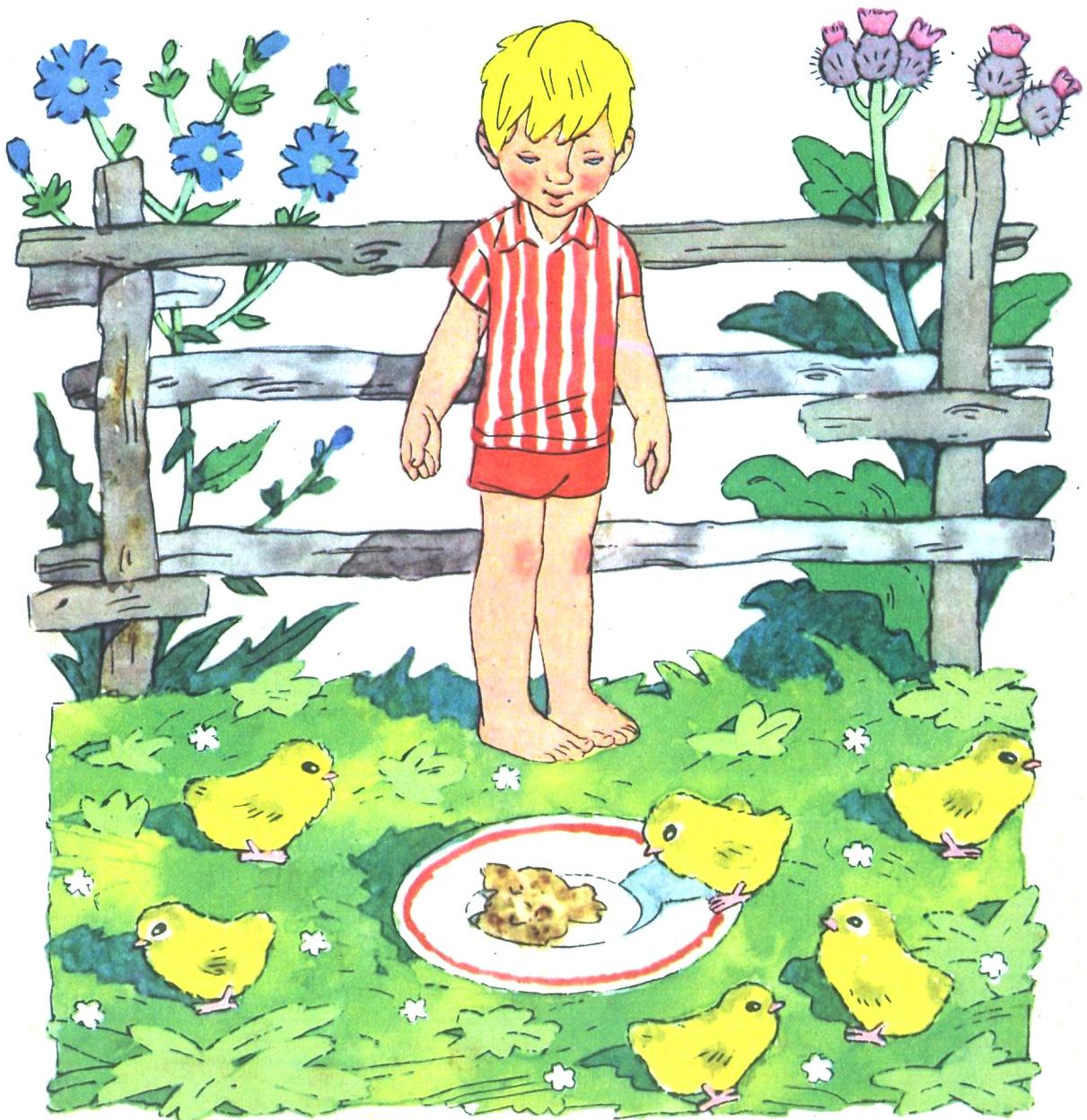
“Yes. He pecked through it and got out.”

“But what about the others?”

“They will, too. See these little cracks on the eggs?”

She held one up for him to see. There was a tiny crack at the tip of the egg where the chick had pecked at the inside of the shell.

All the chicks were hatched that day. They were soon running around, peeping and learning how to peck at their food.



Thursday

The first thing Vanya did when he awoke on Thursday morning was to look at the calendar.

“What’s today? Is it a red letter day?”

“I see you’re beginning to miss Mommy,” Daddy said. “When you’re busy working you never feel sad. Your friends are going to the farm orchard to pick black currants today. Why don’t you go along with them?”

The children hardly ever went to the collective farm orchard, because Sergei Ivanovich, who was in charge of it, was a very strict man. He’d never let anyone into the orchard who had no business being there. But on Thursday he invited all the grown-ups who were not busy mowing and all the children to the



orchard. The black currants were ripe and had to be picked.

Vanya's friends Grinya and Fedya had come to pick berries, too.

"Let's see who picks the most!" Grinya said.

Vanya liked the idea.

Dark, ripe berries peeped at Vanya from under the leaves. He began picking them, one currant here, another there. Then he saw that Grinya had a cupful. And Fedya did, too. But Vanya's cup was only half full. Then Nastya, a big girl who was in the third grade, came over to him and said,

"You're not picking the berries right, Vanya. You have to lift each branch and then pick all the berries on it."

Vanya picked the currants from one branch and they filled his cup to the very top!





“I have a cupful!” he shouted.

“I do, too!” Grinya shouted.

And so it went: Vanya would come to empty his cup of currants into the basket and so would Grinya, and so would Fedya. No one wanted to pick less than the others.

When Vanya came home Grandma said,

“Good for you! You didn’t get wet today, and you didn’t tear your shirt. I know you worked hard, because Sergei Ivanovich said you did. That’s how I’d like you to be always.”

Friday

Grinya and Fedya were going to the meadow for sorrel.

“You can go, too, Vanya,” Grandma said. “I’ll make you a nice summer soup if you bring me back some sorrel.”

It was lovely in the meadow. The grass had not been mown yet. They saw bright flowers everywhere: red ones and yellow ones, and white ones. The meadow was covered with flowers.

The boys spread out and began picking sorrel leaves, moving farther and farther away through the high grass and bright flowers.

Suddenly Fedya said, "Look at all the bees!"

"Look how many there are! And listen to them buzzing," Vanya said.

"Hey! Let's get out of here!" Grinya shouted. "We're in the bee garden! See the beehives?"

The collective farm had a bee garden. It was surrounded by lindens and acacias. The boys could see the bees' little houses through the branches.

"Back, everybody!" Grinya shouted. "But don't make noise and don't wave your hands, or the bees'll sting you."

The boys started walking away from the bee garden, moving very slowly and keeping their arms close to their sides so as not to make the bees angry. They were nearly out of danger when Vanya heard somebody crying. He turned to look at his friends, but it wasn't Fedya, and it wasn't Grinya. It was little Vasya, the beekeeper's





son. He had wandered into the bee garden and was very close to the hives. The bees were stinging him.

“The bees are stinging Vasya!” Vanya shouted.

“What do you want us to do, go in there after him?” Grinya asked. “They’ll sting us if we do.”

“We’ll call his father,” Fedya said. “We’ll tell him when we pass their house.”

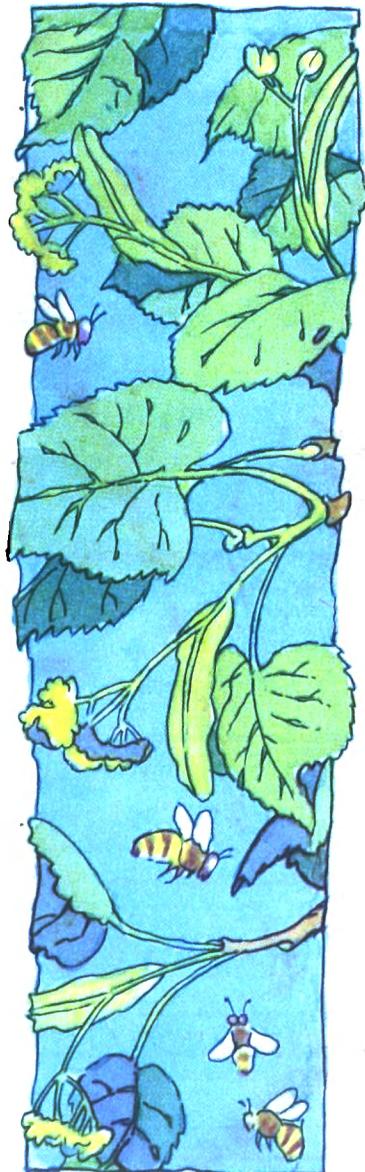
Grinya and Fedya hurried away. But Vanya turned around and headed straight towards the beehives.

“Come here!” he shouted to Vasya.

Vasya didn’t hear him. He was waving his arms and screaming.

Vanya went right up to him, took his hand and led him out of the bee garden. He walked all the way home with him.

Vasya’s mother came running out of the house. She picked him up and scolded.



“What a naughty boy you are! Why did you go to the bee garden? See how badly you’ve been stung!” Then she looked at Vanya. “Oh, dear, look how they’ve stung you, Vanya! And all because of Vasya. I know it hurts, but it’ll go away soon.”

“I’m all right,” Vanya said. As he walked home his lip kept getting bigger and bigger, and his eyelid kept swelling until his eye closed altogether.

“What a sight!” Grandma exclaimed. “Who were you fighting this time?”

“The bees.”

“But why didn’t they sting Grinya or Fedya?”

“Because they ran away, and I took Vasya home. It’ll go away. I’m all right.”

When Daddy came home for lunch he took one look at Vanya and burst out laughing.

“Fedya and Grinya ran away from the bees, but our silly boy went right into the thick of them to rescue Vasya. I can imagine what his mother would say if she could see him now,” Grandma said.

Vanya’s one good eye stared at Daddy as he waited for him to tell him what Mommy would say.

But Daddy smiled broadly, patted his back and said,

“She’d say: what a brave boy I have! That’s what she’d say!”



Saturday

The next morning the lumps on Vanya's face were gone. His lip became small again, and his eye was wide open again. He'd forgotten all about the bees, but there he was, thinking about the moose. At breakfast that morning Daddy had said,

“When I rode by the lake early this morning I saw moose tracks on the bank.”

Vanya went out to the porch and gazed at the woods beyond the fields.

After lunch he went to call for Fedya and said, “Let's go and look for the moose.”



“All right. But let's call Grinya first.”

Soon the three boys were on their way to the woods to look for the moose.

The shaggy branches of the fir trees seemed to be dozing in the warm sun. The farther the boys went into the woods, the darker it became.

After a while Grinya stopped. “I'm not going any farther. We can get lost.”

“Then I'm not, either,” Fedya said. “What do we care about that moose?”

But Vanya so wanted to see it!

“I won't go very far,” he said to himself. “I'll just look in those bushes and then I'll turn back.”





That's what he really wanted to do, but all the while he kept going farther and farther into the woods.

When he finally stopped to look around he didn't know which way he had come. He suddenly realized that it was dark in the woods.

Vanya turned and ran back, but lost his way and couldn't find the road. All of a sudden he came to the edge of the lake. The sun was just going down. It flashed one last time like a burning coal in the far-off tree tops and went out. Everything suddenly became dark and gloomy, but the sunset made the lake look flat and pink.

Vanya stopped in his tracks: there was a large animal standing at the edge of the wood. Its head was raised, and it had large antlers. It stood there listening for a while and then moved on to the water's edge.

The animal lowered its head. Through the mist Vanya saw small pink ripples spread across the water.

"It's the moose!" he whispered. "There's the moose!"

(The moose raised its head, listened for a moment and was gone. It disappeared into the woods so quickly it might never have been there at all.)

The herd came out to the meadow. Uncle Andrei, the collective farm shepherd, had brought the horses there to graze in the night. He spotted Vanya.

“What are you doing here all by yourself? Are you lost?” he asked.

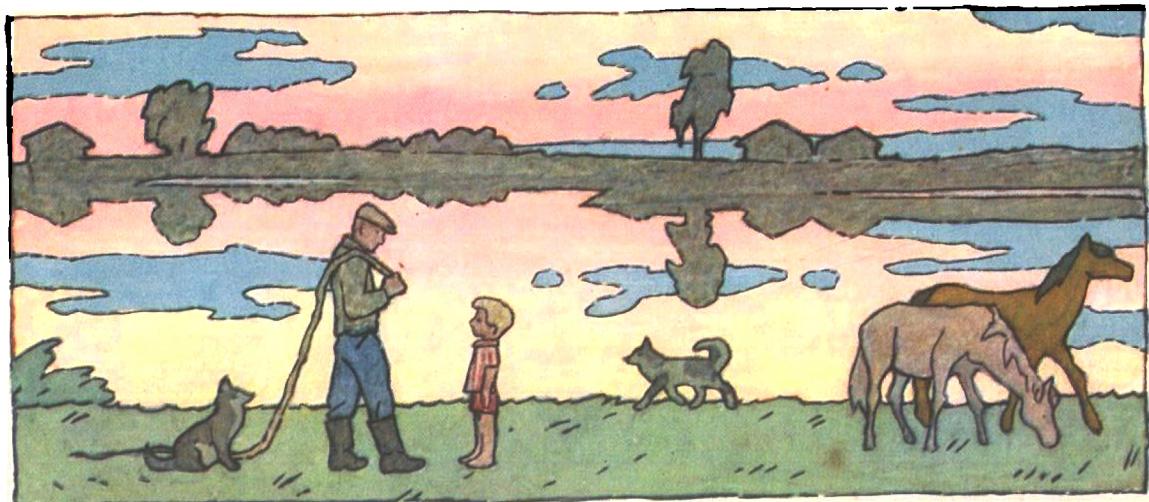
“No. I was looking for the moose.”

Uncle Andrei smiled. “Do you want to see it that badly?”

“I did see it. I just saw it!”

Just then they heard people shouting in the woods.

“Ha-loo! Ha-loo!”



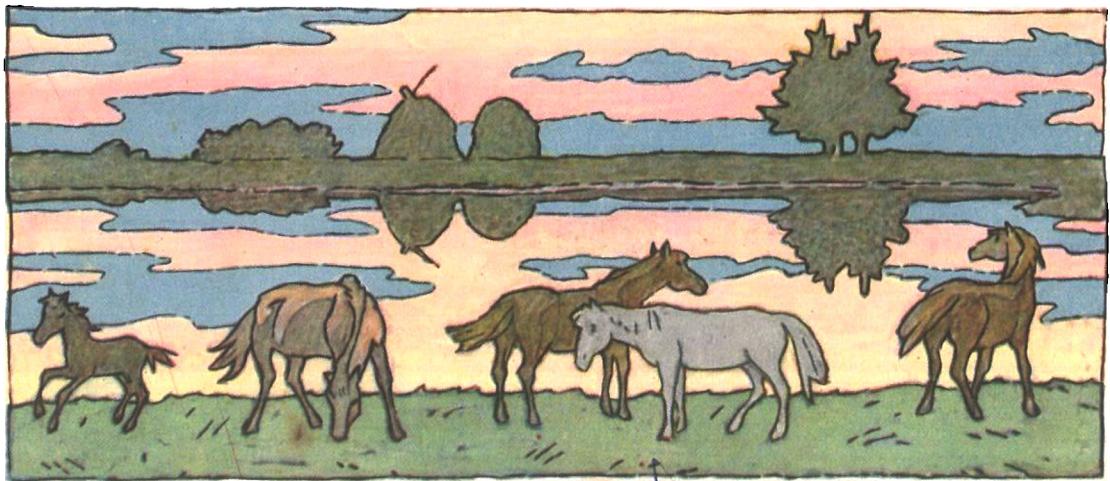
“They’re looking for somebody. Could it be you?” Uncle Andrei asked.

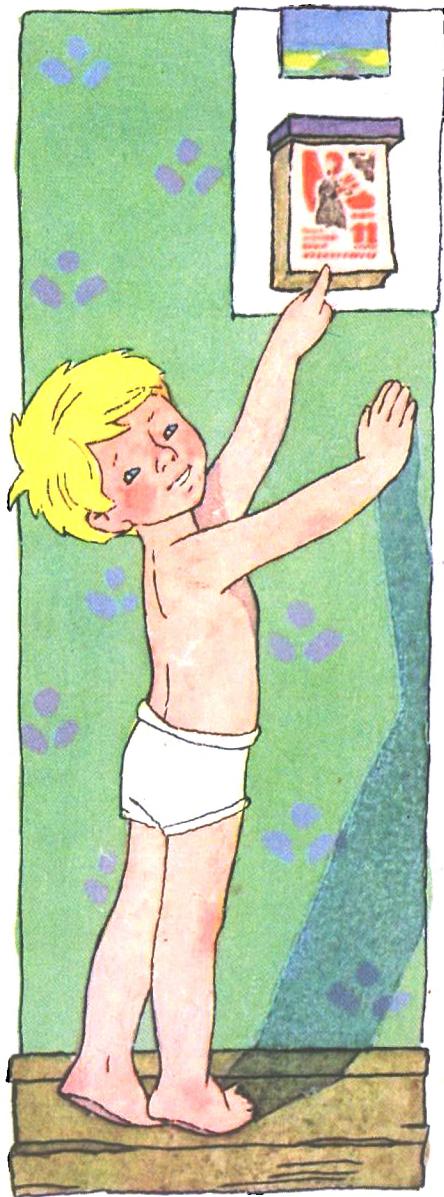
Indeed, they were looking for Vanya: his daddy, the neighbors and the village children. They thought he was lost in the woods.

‘Daddy was very angry. “Why’d you leave without permission? You know you shouldn’t have! Can’t you see how worried everybody is?”’

Grandma scolded Vanya, too, and as she scolded him she kept wiping away her tears. When everyone finally calmed down Vanya said in a happy voice,

“I saw the moose, Daddy!” and put his arms around his daddy’s neck.





Sunday

On Sunday Grandma made hotcakes. Vanya was so tired after his adventure the night before that he overslept.

“Get up, Vanya! The hotcakes are ready!” Daddy called.

But Vanya did not reply.

Then Daddy said, “What’s today, Vanya?”

“I don’t know.”

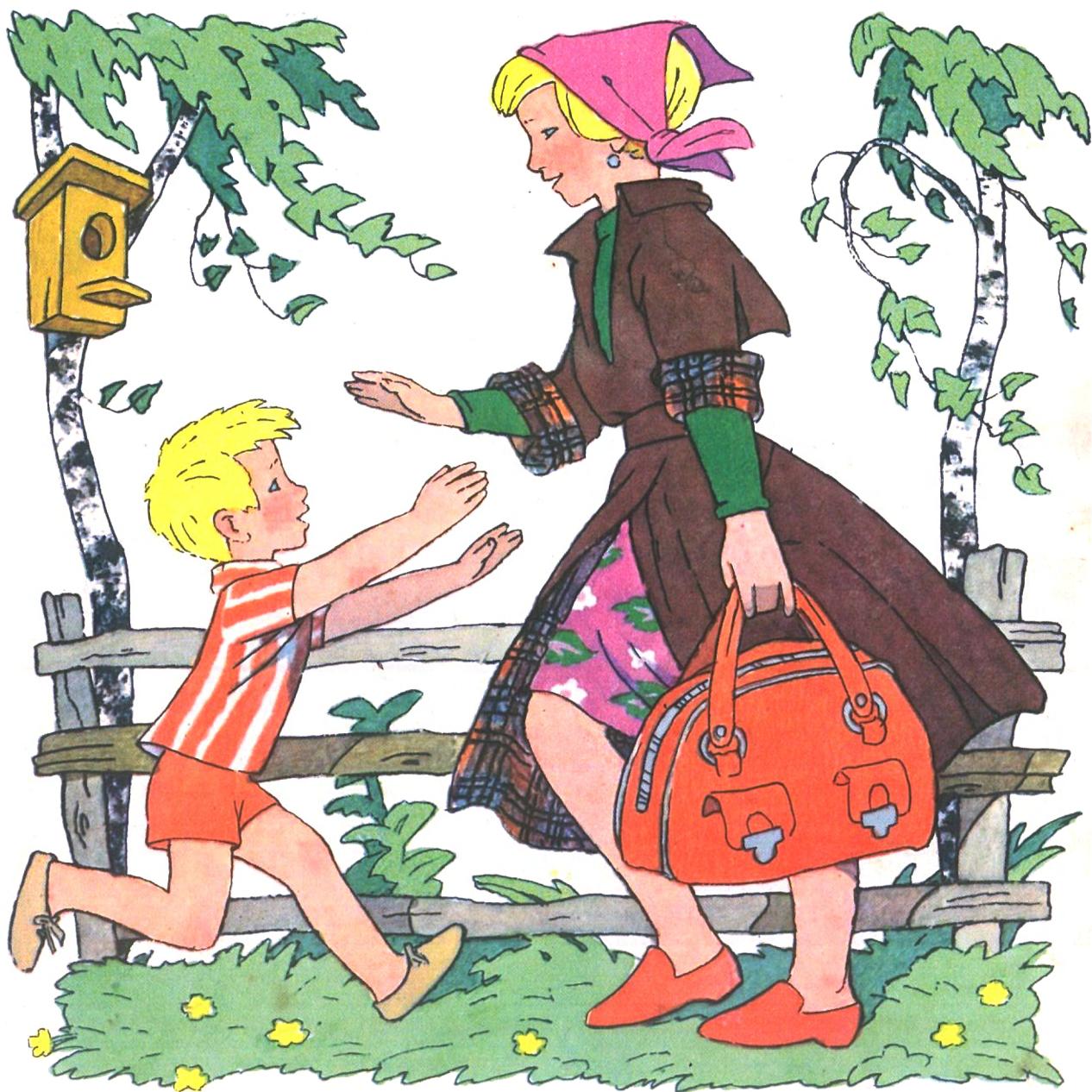
“I think it’s a red letter day.”

Vanya sat up in bed. “It is?”

He jumped out of bed, ran over to the calendar and clapped his hands.

“It is! It’s a red letter day! Where’s my shirt? Where are my shoes?”

Vanya washed quickly, dressed quickly, grabbed a



hotcake and ran outside to wait for Mommy. A car drove up as he reached the porch.

“Mommy’s back!” he shouted. The car stopped. Mommy was sitting beside the driver. She got out of the car, and Vanya ran up to her. Mommy hugged him.

“Hello, darling! Are you all right? Are you well?”

! Mommy went inside and greeted Daddy and Grandma. Then she kissed Vanya again and said, “See how quickly the week went by?”





A LIVE LANTERN

Daddy was late coming home from work. Vanya went to meet him, and they walked through the dense birch copse together.

(By then it was dark. The trees were nodding above the narrow path. The flowers in the clearings had closed their petals and gone to sleep.) You could not tell now whether they were red or blue, though the white flowers looked like tall candles and seemed to glow in the dark.



\ Vanya hurried along, trying to keep up with Daddy. Daddy would take one step, and Vanya would take three, but still he kept dropping behind.)

“It’s dark here,” Vanya said. “I can’t see the path. We might get lost.”

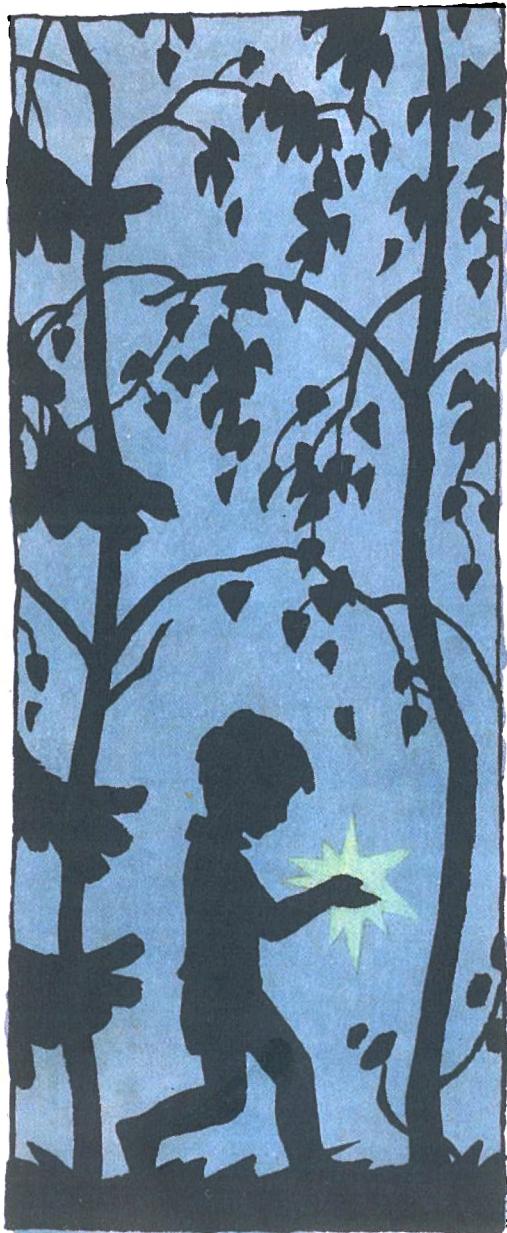
“Don’t worry. We won’t.”

Vanya wanted to say, “Don’t walk so fast, Daddy! I can’t keep up with you, and it’s scarey walking behind.” But he said nothing, although he hoped Daddy would stop.

Indeed, he did stop.

“You said it’s dark. Well, here’s a little lantern to light your way.”





Vanya came closer.

“Where’s the lantern?”

“Here. Can’t you see it?
It’s glowing in the grass.”

Vanya looked hard.
Then he saw the light. A
tiny green light, as tiny as a
spark, was glimmering in
the dark grass.

“Pick it up carefully so’s
it won’t go out,” Daddy
said.

Vanya picked up the
green spark together with a
handful of grass. The grass
was wet from the evening
dew, but still the little light
glowed on. Vanya walked
along, carrying it gingerly.

“Well? Is it lighter
now?” Daddy asked.

The green spark was
not even bright enough to
light his hands, but Vanya
felt the path was lighter.
When they reached home
Vanya shouted from the

porch, "Mommy! Grandma! Look at the lantern we found!"

He ran into the house, opened his hands and said, "Look!"

"My eyes must be failing," Grandma said. "I don't see any lantern."

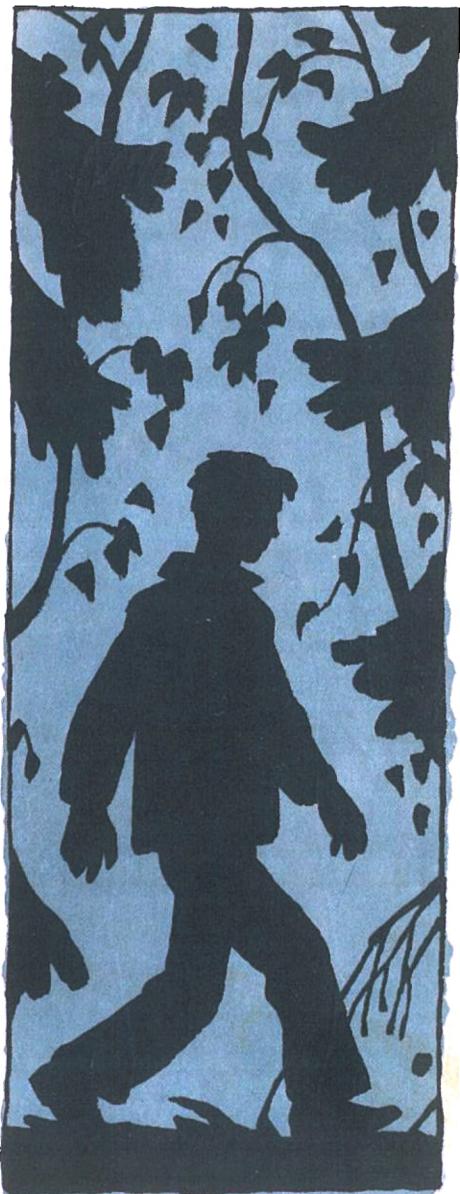
"Neither do I," Mommy said. "All I see is grass."

Vanya held his hands up closely, but all they saw was grass.

"I must've lost it," he whispered. There was a lump in his throat, but Vanya was a brave boy. He clenched his teeth, blinked hard and didn't cry.

"It might still be here. Let's see if we can find it," Daddy said.

They spread the grass out on the table, the wet little leaves and blades from the woods.





All of a sudden Vanya said, "Look, there's a worm here!" He wanted to throw out the dark little worm that was hiding in the grass.

"Wait a minute," Daddy said. "That's your lantern. Let's see how it shines in the dark."

Vanya turned off the light. The room became dark. They all looked for the green light.

"I can't see a thing," Grandma said.

Then Mommy said, "It's just a handful of grass. That's all it is."

"Shh. Don't make any noise," Daddy said. "The glowworm got frightened and turned off its light. As soon as it feels safe, it'll turn it on again."

They sat around the table in silence and waited. A minute passed, and then another, and a third.

Suddenly a tiny little forest light went on among the wet blades and leaves. A little green spot glowed in the darkness.

"There it is! I can see it now," Grandma said.

"So can I. You and Daddy found a glowworm," Mommy said.

Vanya was so glad and so proud he had brought home such a wonderful surprise. He looked at the glowworm and laughed. Then he asked,

"Where does its light come from, Daddy?"

"I don't know. We'll have a closer look at it in the daylight tomorrow, and maybe we'll find out."

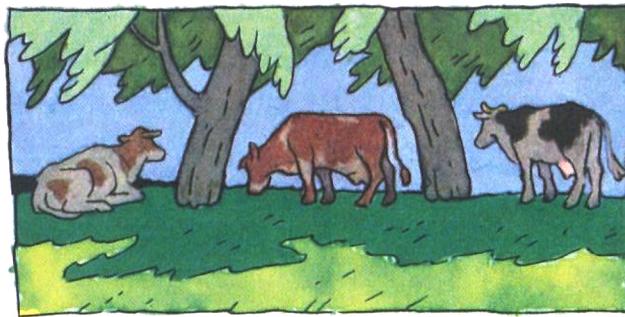
"It's getting late," Mommy said and turned on the light. "It's time for supper."

(Vanya gathered up the grass and the glowworm. He put everything into a box. In the morning he and Daddy would surely find out where the glowworm got its light.)

But when Vanya opened the box the next morning the glowworm was gone. All he found was grass and leaves. The live lantern had crawled away, and so Vanya couldn't find out how it turned on its light, how it turned it off, or where the light came from.

But in a little while, when Vanya gets older and goes to school, he'll certainly find the answers in a book.





GRANDSON VANYA

The Argument

Vanya and Dunya both decided to visit Granny. Dunya came by first. She crossed the yard and then saw Vanya right behind her. Dunya stopped.

“Why’d you come to my granny’s house?” she said.

“Why’d you come?”

“Because she’s my granny.”

“No, she isn’t. She’s mine.”



Granny heard them arguing and came out onto the porch.

“Goodness! What are you arguing about? Your daddy’s my son, Dunya. That means you’re my granddaughter.”

“There! See?” Dunya said.

But Granny continued, “And Vanya’s mother is my daughter. That means you’re my grandson, Vanya. So you see, you’re both right.”

“But I’m Granny’s favorite granddaughter. My mommy says so, too!” Dunya said and went inside.

Vanya didn’t know what to say. He just stood there blinking his blue eyes at Granny.

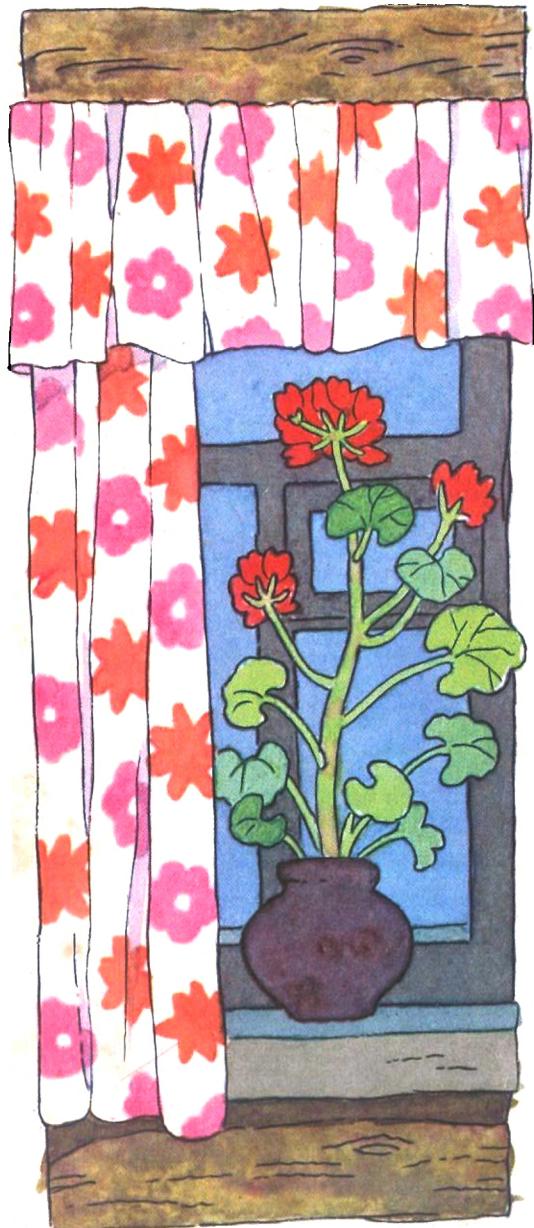
“Come, Vanya. Come into the house,” Granny said.

Vanya followed her in. Dunya was already sitting at the table.

Sugar Buns

Granny’s big room was very cheerful. There were bright curtains on the windows and potted red geraniums on the windowsills.

The wall clock had a brass pendulum. It kept swinging back and forth, flashing sun-spots on the walls.



“Did you bake any sugar buns today, Granny?” Dunya asked. “Because it’s Sunday.”

“Why, certainly. Of course, I did.”

Granny took a large plate covered with a linen napkin from the shelf. She took off the napkin. Underneath were lovely, golden-brown sugar buns. Dunya grabbed one.

“Oh! It’s yummy! Give me another one,” she said.

“You haven’t eaten this one yet.”

“So what? I have room for more.”

“Eat it in good health,” Granny said. “What about you, Vanya? Here, take one.”

“I’m not hungry. I had my breakfast.”

But Granny picked out the largest, sweetest bun

and gave it to him. "What a child! He always has to be coaxed!" she said. "That was breakfast, and that was long ago."

"Can't you see he doesn't want any?" Dunya said. "I have room for five more. Maybe even ten!"

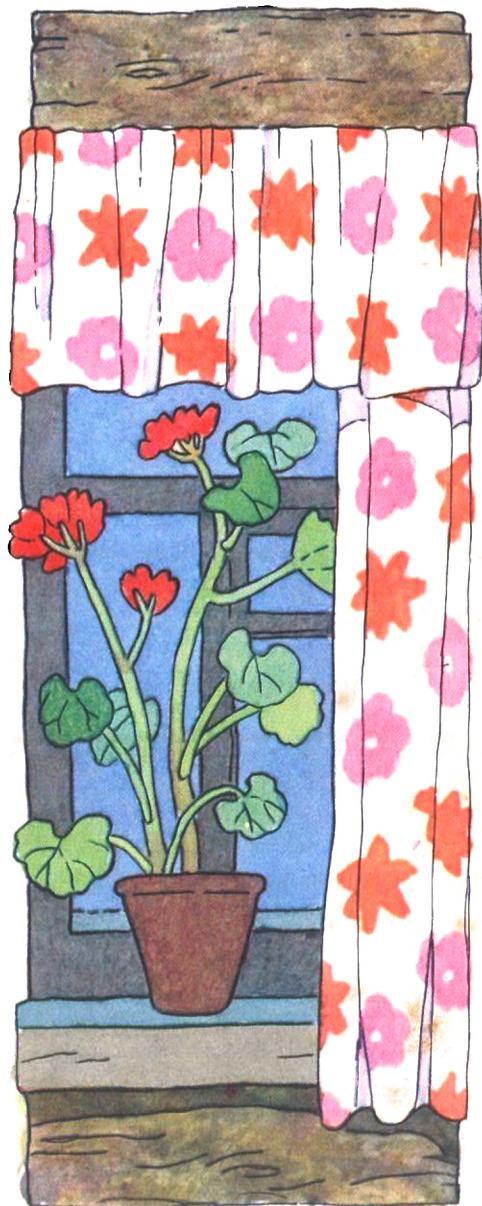
Granny made Vanya sit down at the table.

"I didn't come for sugar buns," he said.

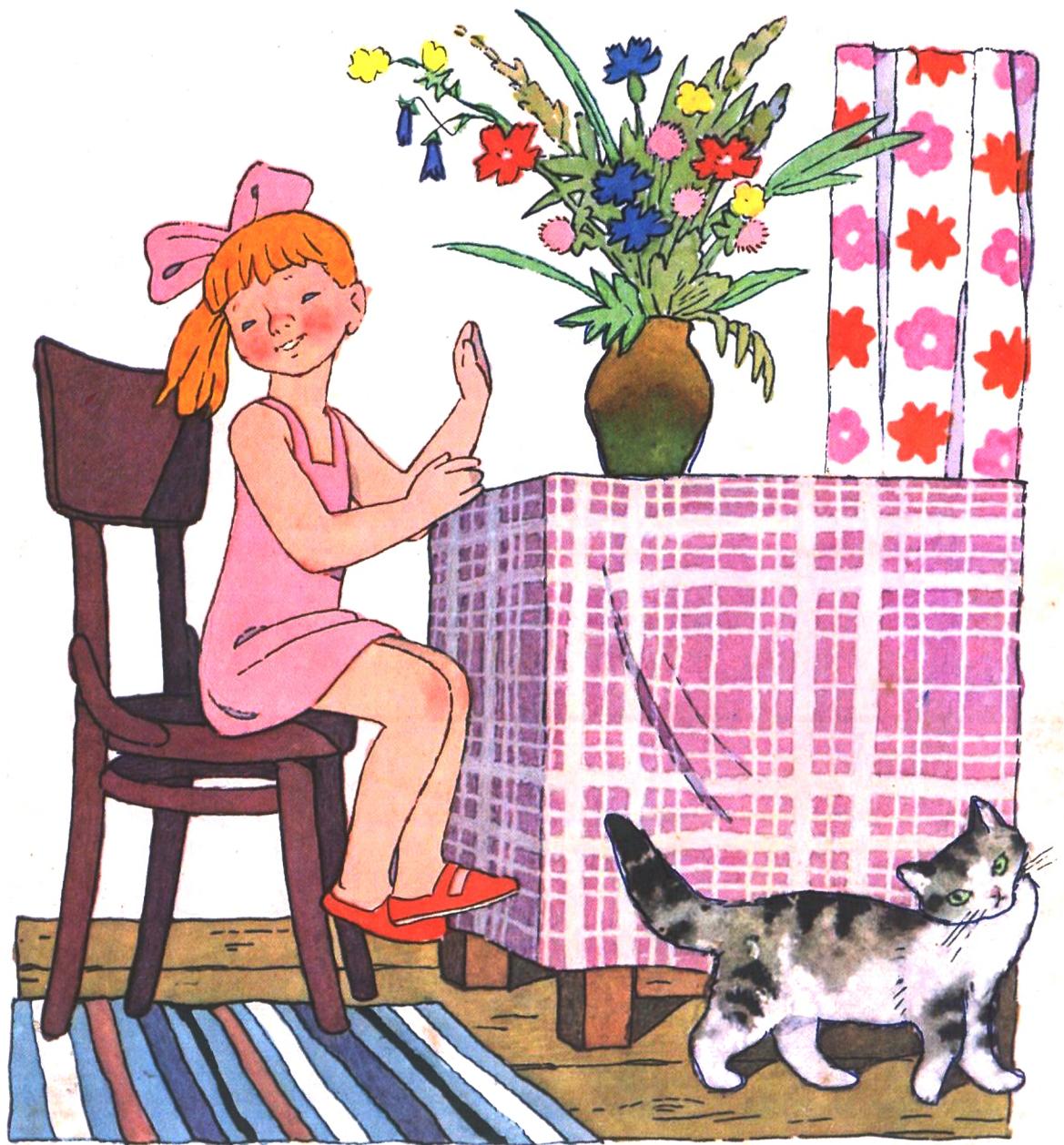
"I know," Granny replied. "I know why you came. You want to hear a story. But have a bun anyway."

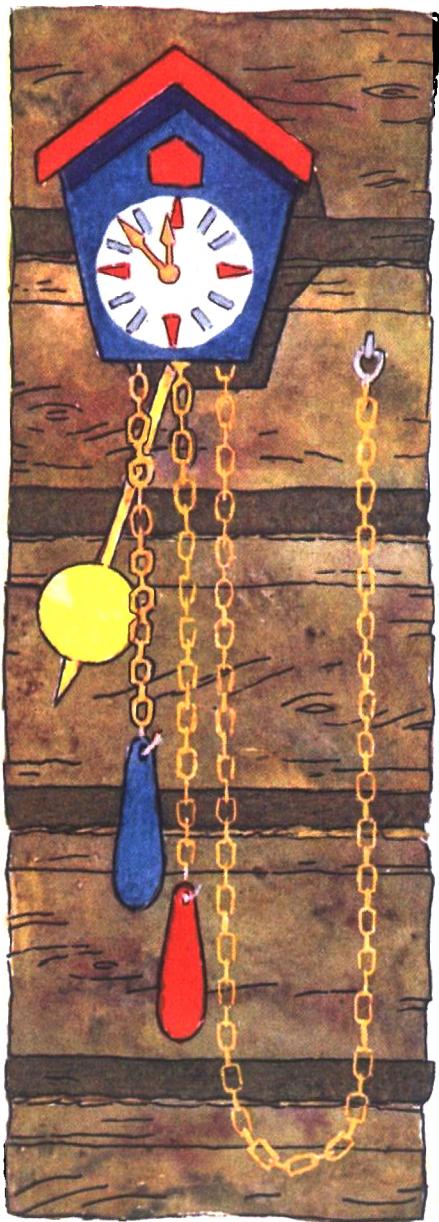
A Favorite Granddaughter

The brass pendulum was swinging back and forth, flashing sun-spots on the walls. It was swinging, and









that meant it was moving the hands of the clock and telling time. When both hands reached the number "12" the clock began to strike. *Bong! Bong! Bong!*

"The cows are waiting for me. It's time for me to go to work now," Granny said.

Dunya couldn't bear to part with the buns. She sounded cross when she said,

"Why do you keep on working, Granny? You're old, and you shouldn't be working."

"Who says so? Do you mean that it's your idea?" Granny was very surprised.

"No. That's what my mommy says. My mommy says, 'Why should Granny be working? She's provided for, but she still keeps on working at her age.'"



Granny put on a clean white apron and a white kerchief.

“I’m not as young as I used to be, but I’m still going strong,” she said. “And while I am, I like to work.”

“But you get a pension, Granny. What do you need so much money for?”

“It’s not a matter of money, dear. It’s a matter of how I want to live. What would my life be without my work? Even a bird works, and I’m certainly no worse than a bird. Come, children. It’s time for me to leave.”

“But what about the buns, Granny?” Dunya pouted. “I only had three!”



“Take as many as you like.”

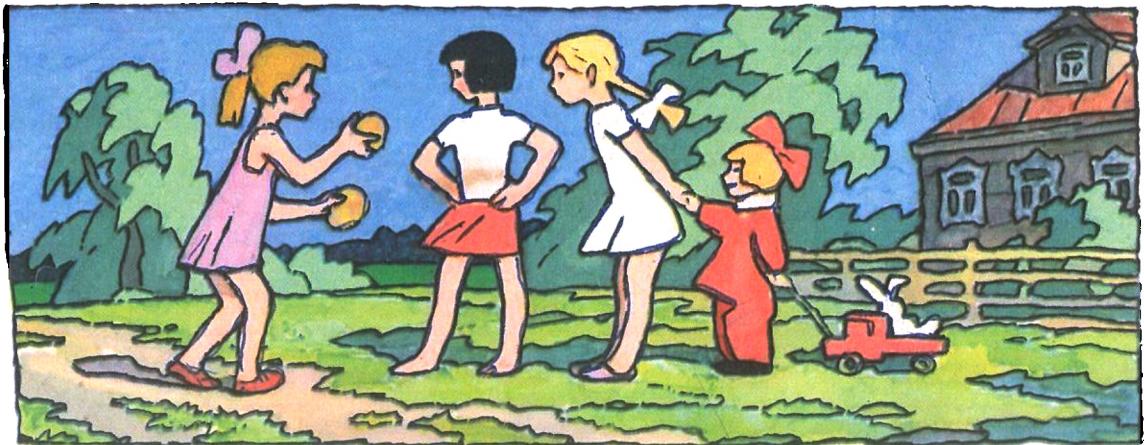
Dunya took two more, one for each hand. Then she took a third and put it in her pocket. She had no place to put any more.

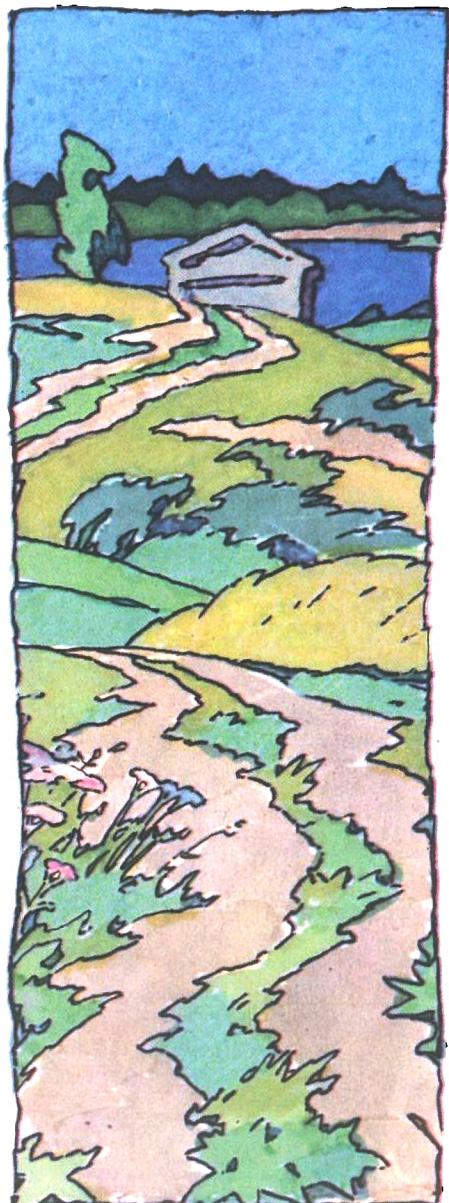
“Go on, take some, Vanya,” Granny said.

But Vanya went straight to the door. “I don’t want any more. I want you to have some left over for supper.”

They all went outside. Dunya saw her friends and ran to them, shouting,

“See how many sugar buns my granny gave me! But she didn’t give Vanya any. That’s because I’m her favorite granddaughter!”





Cow Stories

Dunya stayed to play with her friends, but Vanya went along to the meadow with Granny.

The sun was high in the sky, just like a yellow sunflower.

Granny and Vanya walked down the soft dirt road through the field of rye. Vanya was barefoot. Pink clover and blue cornflowers grew at the edge of the road.

“Now tell me a cow story, Granny,” Vanya said.

“I’ve told you these stories so many times you’re probably sick and tired of hearing them.”

“No, I’m not.”

“Well then, listen.”

And this is the story she told him.



“There’s a cow named Beauty. She’s called Beauty, because she’s a beautiful cow. Her coat gleams like silk. Her horns are set high on her head. She’s very proud of her beauty. She wasn’t giving much milk, though, so one day I said to her,

“Listen, Beauty, a cow’s beauty is not in its horns or pride. A cow’s beauty is in its milk. Brownie is not as fine-looking as you, but she gives much more milk.”

“Beauty looked at me and mooed. This is what she said:

“If you could choose, would you really choose Brownie instead of me?”

“Yes, I would. We should all work hard at what we do best. And you’re not doing a good job at all. Do you think you’re a bird of paradise for us to admire you?”

“Beauty thought this over and then said:



Beauty

“I’m a big cow, and I need more food. If I get more food, I’ll give you more milk.”

“Now that was more like it. From then on I started giving her more hay every evening. And she gave me more milk.”

“And that’s the end of the story.”

“Now tell me about Brownie.”

“All right.”

And Granny told him a story about Brownie.

“Brownie is a small cow. She’s all brown and is not very good-looking. Her horns lie flat against her head. And she’s very touchy. But she gives a lot of good, rich milk. One day I started milking her, but there was no milk, so I said,

“Why won’t you give me any milk, Brownie?”

“She snorted and said, ‘I just won’t.’



Brownie

“‘Why not? I take care of you, and now you say you won’t give me any milk. That’s not nice, is it?’

“‘You’re not nice, either. You gave Beauty a chunk of bread, and you patted her. But there was nothing for me. That’s why I’m not going to give you any milk.’

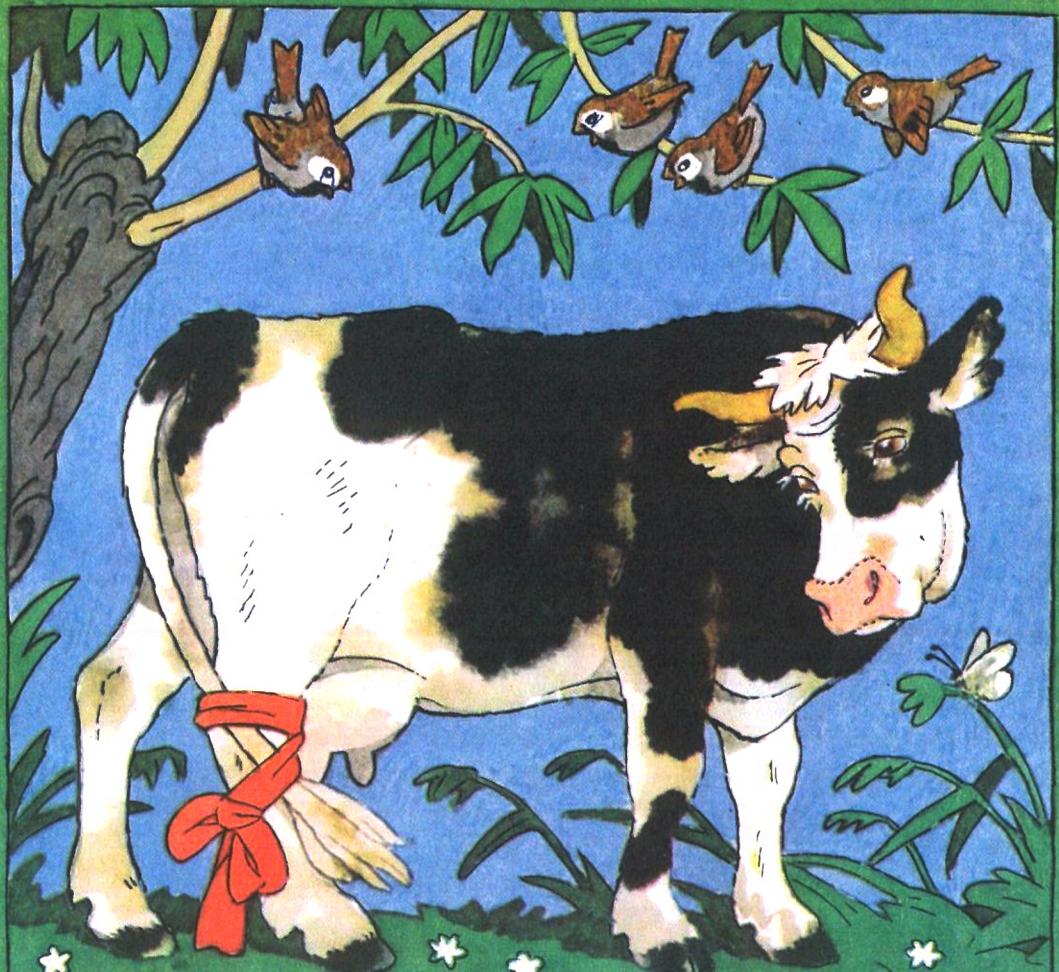
“‘And you know, she was right! I had forgotten all about the bread I had for her. It was in my pocket.

“‘Here’s your share, Brownie. I’m awfully sorry. I brought it just for you. I’ll pat you and scratch your head. Let’s be friends again.’

“‘All right. But next time don’t forget.’

“‘I haven’t. See the bread in my pocket? It’s for her. And that’s the end of the story.’

“‘Now tell me about Blackie.’



BLACKIE

“Blackie is a very special cow. She’s full of mischief. When you come up to her she looks at you and seems to be deciding whether she’s going to run away or not. She wants to run away, but there’s the bread in my hand. She wants it. Once, when I sat down to milk Blackie, she began swishing her tail. It looked as if she was swishing flies away, but she kept hitting my shoulder every time.

“So I said to her,

“‘Why do you keep slapping me with your tail, Blackie? Stop it.’ But she snorted and said,

“‘I won’t.’

“‘Then I’ll tie your tail to your leg.’

“‘No, you won’t.’

“There was nothing I could do, so I tied her tail to her leg. She pulled this way and that, but couldn’t pull it free. She mooed and said:

“‘If you untie my tail, I won’t slap you any more.’

(“That’s how I made Blackie behave. And that’s how we get along: I’m gentle with one cow, have to coax another, and the third has to have her tail tied to her leg.”)

“Now tell me about Bright Star.”

“No. You’ve had enough stories for now, Vanya. Look, there’s the herd.”

A Magic Word

The herd was resting under the willows by the river. The cows were dozing in the shade.

Soon the milkmaids came to the meadow and awakened the cows. When the women saw Vanya they said to Granny,

“Is that our new helper?”

“Is he going to be our new shepherd?”

“No, no. This is my grandson Vanya,” Granny said.

The women laughed and teased, pretending they didn’t know that Vanya was Granny’s grandson.

Then Granny said, “I’m going to milk the cows. You go down to the river for a dip, Vanya, but be



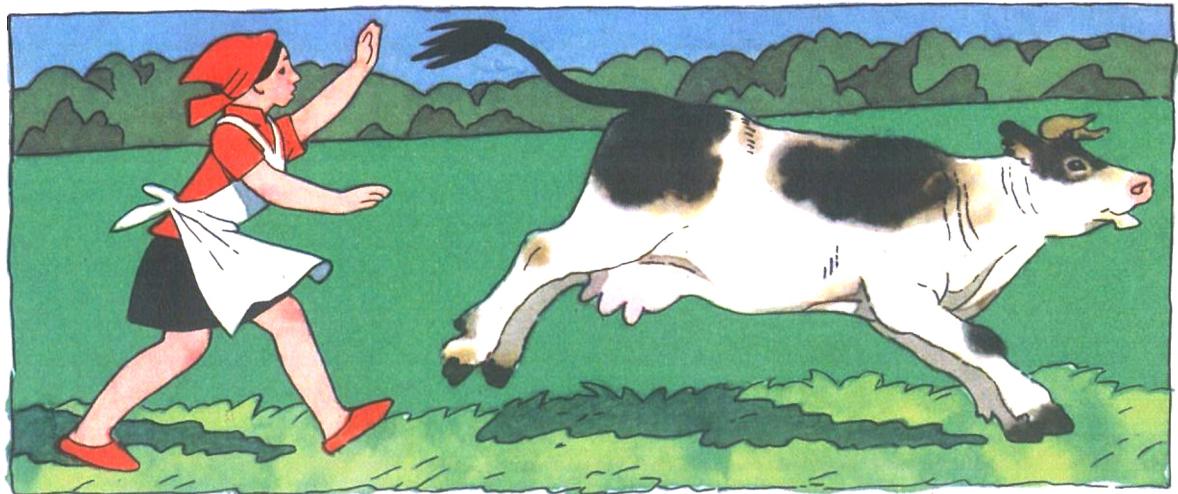


sure you put a burdock leaf on your head, because the sun is very hot."

Vanya went down to the river. He splashed around and played with the tiny fishes. It was very shallow there. There were always lots of tiny fishes where the sun warmed the water through to the very bottom.

If you splash and frighten them they scatter, shooting out in all directions like tiny silver arrows. But if you stand very still they'll soon come back and swim around your ankles. That's how they play.

Vanya picked some green stalks of sedge that



grew in the water near the bank. He found a burdock by the bushes and broke off a leaf for a hat. Then he sat down under the willows and braided the sedge.

Uncle Andrei, the shepherd, was lying beside him in the shade. His cap was pulled down over his eyes. He was sleeping.

All of a sudden there was a great commotion. A milk pail clattered. Matryona, one of the milkmaids, shouted and began to scold,

“You beast! I hope the wolves eat you!”

Matryona slapped her cow. Spot ran off, making angry noises.

Granny was just through milking Brownie.

“You should never hit a cow, Matryona,” she said.

“It’s her own fault! She kicked over the pail and spilled the milk. Look at her galloping around! I’ll never catch her now. She won’t give any more milk today, that’s for sure. She’s a horrible cow.”

“Now, don’t carry on like that,” Granny said. “Let’s get to the bottom of it. A horsefly bit her, and she wanted to kick it off, but kicked the pail by mistake. It wasn’t her fault. She didn’t do it on purpose. Try to understand her.”

Matryona was getting closer to the angry cow.

“Stand still, Spot!” she said.



But Spot rolled her eyes, snorted and was off again.

“She doesn’t trust you,” Granny said. “You slapped her once, and you might slap her again. Let me talk to her.”

Granny went over to Spot, spoke to her gently and scratched her head behind her horns, for cows love to be scratched like that. Then she took a clean cloth from her pocket and wiped Spot’s tears, because she was crying.

“There, my dear girl, everything’s all right. Don’t be angry. It’s time to be milked. Come here, Matryona. Spot’s not angry any more. And you be good to her.”

Matryona came up to Spot and patted her. Then she sat down to milk the cow. The other women gathered around Granny.

“Oh, Granny, why do the cows always listen to you?” one of them asked. Uncle Andrei pushed his cap back on his head and said in a sleepy voice, “That’s because Granny knows a magic word.”

“Tell us the word!” the women pleaded. “Is it a secret word?”

“It’s a very simple one,” Granny replied. “You have to understand a cow and respect it. But, most important, you have to love it.) That’s all the magic there is to it.”



Wild Strawberries

Summer is a wonderful time. All the world is green and bright. The meadows are full of flowers. There are white daisies, blue cornflowers and buttercups as yellow as pure gold. This is a time when wild strawberries become red and juicy in the warm clearings in the woods.

The children had gone to the woods for berries. The wild strawberries that grew on little hillocks were very sweet but small. If you looked in the grass, though, you'd find large ones that looked like scarlet earrings. The quicker you were, the more berries you'd have. Dunya was a quick girl, and while the others had only picked half a jar each, she had a jar full of wild strawberries. Vanya was slow. He spent more time wandering around and admiring everything his blue eyes saw.

"It looks like there's a party in the woods today," he was thinking. "All the trees are beautiful. They're stand-

ing so still. And the birds are singing as if they're company and have come to a party. There's always singing at parties."

Soon the children were ready to go home. Each had a jar full of berries. They called to Vanya,

"We're going home, Vanya!"

"Come on! You don't want to be left here all by yourself!"

But Vanya paid no attention to them. He went over to a white birch tree and admired it. Then he saw a mighty oak and went over to it. Then he saw a woodpecker and watched its red head bob as it pecked away.

Vanya wandered on.

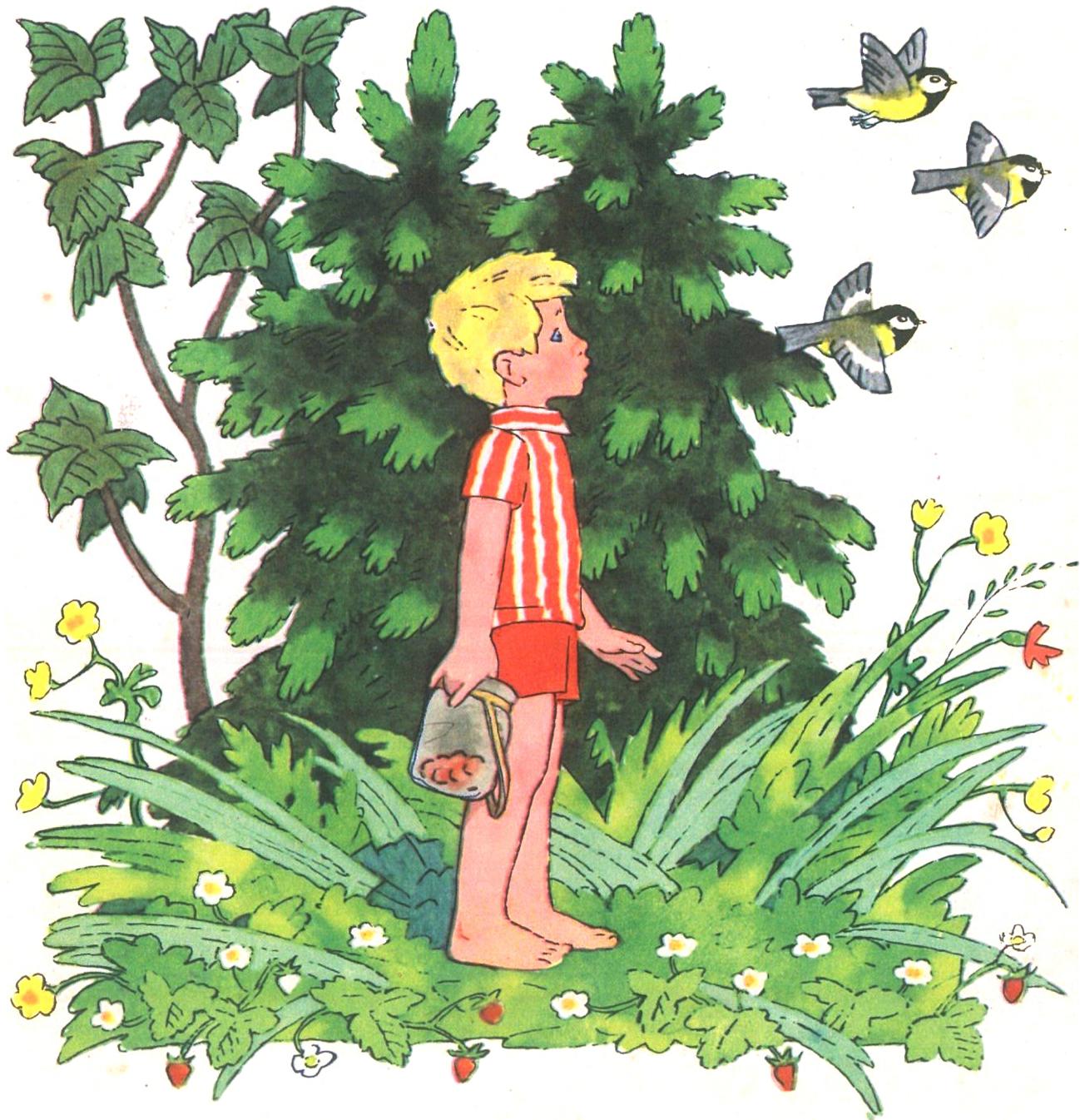
Soon all the children were gone, but this didn't frighten him. There was a highway nearby, so he couldn't get lost. Then he noticed that it was getting darker in the woods.

"Oh! It'll soon be dark, and I don't have any strawberries!"

Vanya started hunting for them, but it was hard to find any berries in the twilight in the woods. He only picked about three handfuls, half of which were squashed and the other still green. It was no use. He'd have to go home.

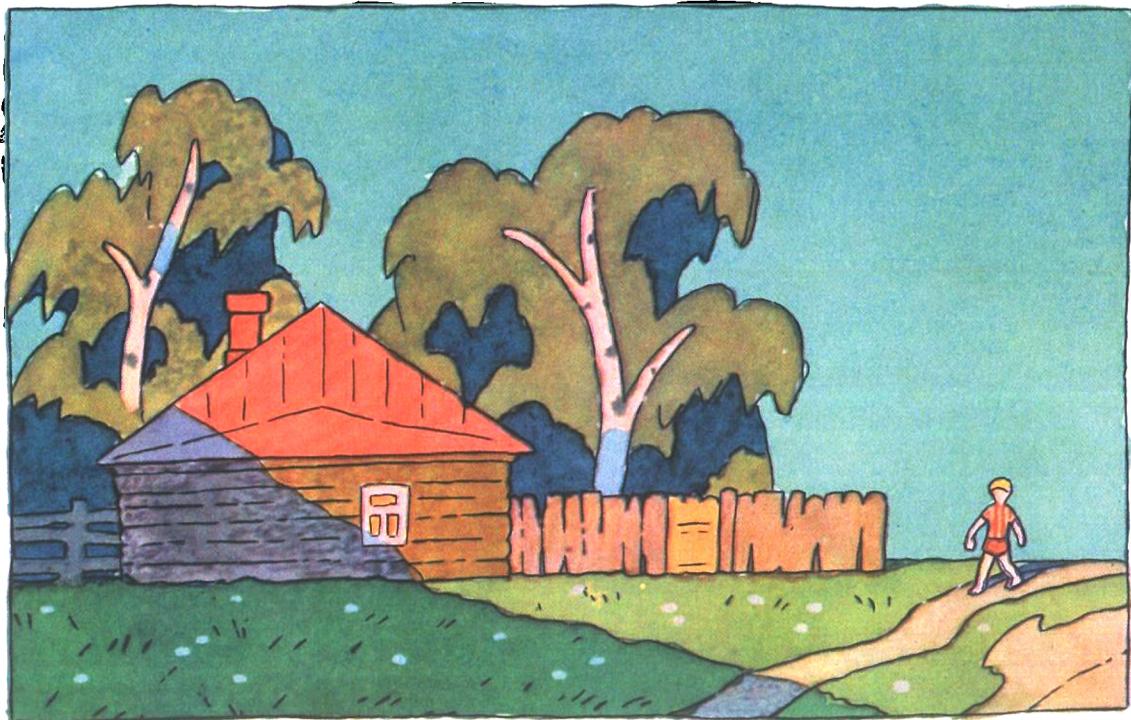
Vanya went to the highway and followed it back to the village.





The herd had just come in from the meadows. The village street was red from the sunset. The roofs were all red on one side, and it looked as if someone had painted a red streak on every birch tree.

Vanya shook the berries in his jar. There weren't many, and they weren't really good berries, but they'd do for tea.



He headed home. All of a sudden he stopped in the middle of the street.

“I’ll give half to Granny. She likes berries with her tea,” he said to himself.

When he got to Granny’s house he saw that Dunya was first again.

“I’ve brought you some wild strawberries, Granny,” she was saying.

Granny was very pleased. “Why, thank you, my pet! Thank you for thinking of your granny.”

“Mommy told me to,” Dunya said. “So I brought you some.”

“Well, thank your mother then.”

Then Granny saw Vanya standing shyly in the doorway. “What is it, Vanya?”

“I’ve brought you some wild strawberries, too.”

“Did your mother send you, too?”

“No. I came by myself.”

Granny smiled and patted Vanya’s blond head. “That’s a real present. Thank you, my dear. You’ve made me very happy.”

Dunya pouted. “My strawberries are better than his. His aren’t even ripe. They’re all green. But mine are sweet and red! We’d have had them ourselves, but Mommy said to take these to you.”

“Well, you take them back, my dear, and have them yourselves. I’ll have these green ones with my

tea. Go on, do take them." Granny gave Dunya back the berries she had brought.

Dunya was so happy that she ate them all on the way home.

What a Surprise!

The collective farm chairman said, "We have a bonus for our best worker. It's a month's vacation at a seaside resort."

There was a meeting at the farm office. Everyone said that Vanya's grandmother had worked hard all her life and should be the one to go.

Vanya's mommy took him along to see her mother, who was his granny.

"Oh, Mother! I'm so glad you're going to the seashore. Let me help you pack. Tell me if there's anything you want me to wash or iron for you," Vanya's mommy said.

"I'm quite able to get ready and pack by myself."

But Vanya's mommy went over to the chest of drawers and began taking Granny's things out.

Just then Dunya and her mother came in.

"Congratulations," Dunya's mother said. "But won't you feel lonely going so far all by yourself?"

“I won’t be lonely. There’ll be other people there,” Granny replied.

“But they’ll all be strangers.”

“I can’t take my family. There’s only one reservation.”

“That doesn’t matter,” Dunya’s mother said. “I’ve just found out that you can take a child along. So, you see, you can take Dunya. It’ll be good for both of you. Besides, you’ll have your favorite granddaughter there with you.”

Granny didn’t say anything for a while. She seemed to be thinking it over. Then she said, “We’ll see when the time comes.”

“But you’re leaving in a week!”

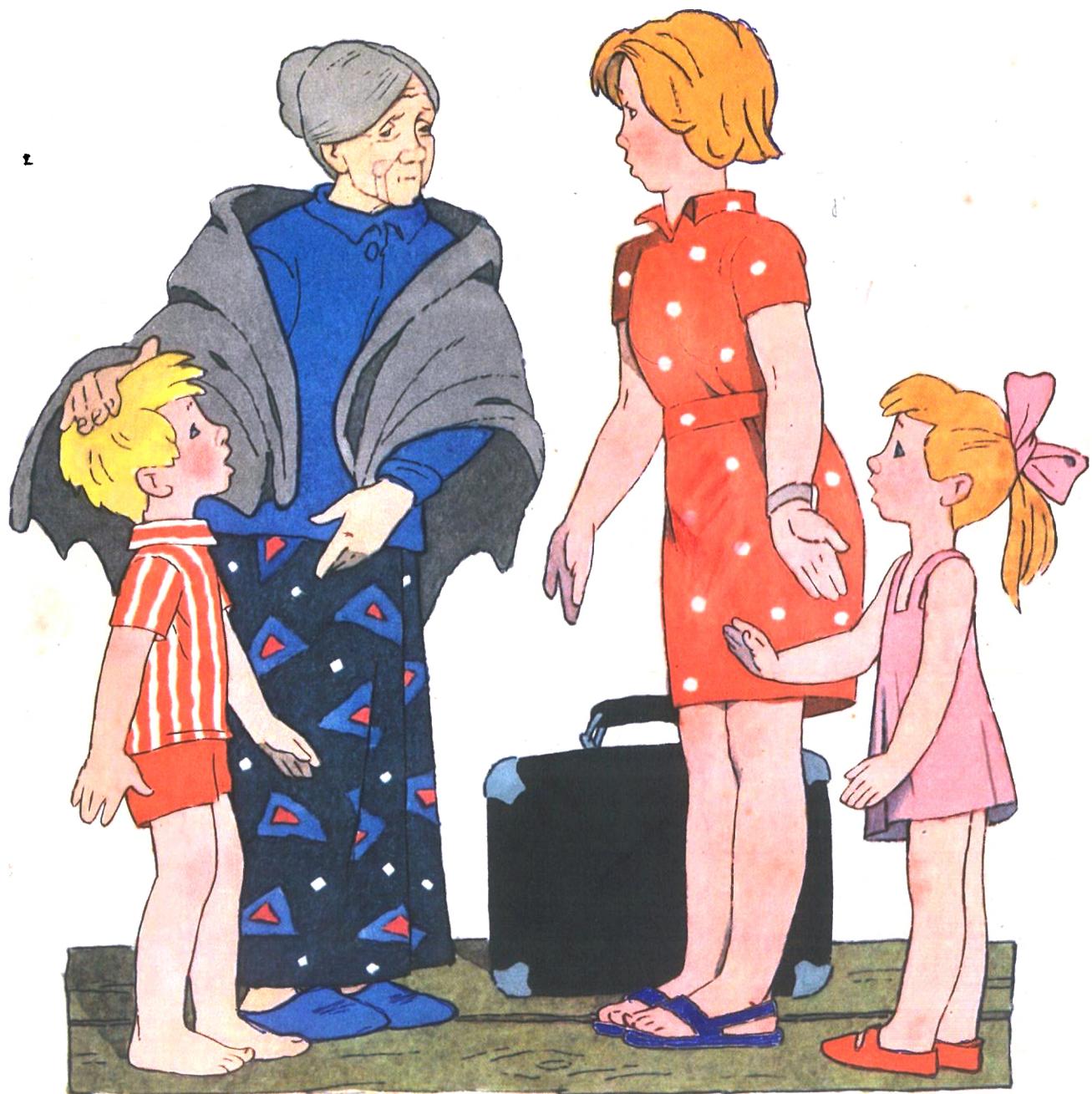
“Then we’ll decide in a week from now.”

Dunya began skipping around the room, shouting,

“I’m going to the seashore with Granny! I’m going to the seashore! But you’re staying home, Vanya!”

Vanya said nothing. Oh, how he wanted to go with Granny! More than anything else in the world. But there was nothing he could do.) After all, Dunya was Granny’s favorite granddaughter. That meant she would go with Granny. He’d miss Granny when she was away.

The days slipped by. Vanya would often come to



see Granny and go to the meadow with her. He would ask her to tell him cow stories, but each day he looked sadder and sadder.

“Why are you so unhappy, Vanya?” Granny asked.

“Because you’re going away.”

“I’ll be back soon.”

“It’ll be autumn by then. That’s not soon.”

“You won’t be unhappy when I’m away, will you?”

“No. But it’s better when you’re here. I’ll be waiting for you, Granny.”

Granny just smiled and shook her head.

Soon the week ended. The family gathered in Granny’s house that morning to see her off. Dunya’s mother came carrying a small suitcase.

“Here are Dunya’s things. Everything you’ll need.”

“What will I need them for?” Granny asked.

“I don’t mean you. I mean Dunya.”

“Well, if they’re Dunya’s things, you’ll need them at home.”

“What?” Dunya’s mother was so surprised she set down the suitcase. “How can Dunya go along with you if she has no clothes?”

“Who said she was going along with me? Did I say I’d take her?”

“But I’m your favorite granddaughter!” Dunya shouted. “Who’ll go along with you if not me?”

“He will,” Granny said and nodded at Vanya. “Go on, Vanya dear. I know it won’t take long to get you packed.”

Vanya was so excited he gasped. “Me, Granny? To the seashore? I don’t have to pack! I can go in my shorts!”

Granny looked at all of them and shook her head. “Why are you so surprised? Dunya won’t even think of me once when I’m away, but Vanya will miss me. So he might as well come along, just as he is, in his shorts. It’s hot there anyway.”



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